

*The* KINGS TREASURIES  
OF LITERATURE



GENERAL EDITOR  
SIR A. T. QUILLER COUCH





THE LADY OF THE PORTRAIT  
*from the painting by SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS*

*THE*  
BEAU OF BATH  
*and other*  
One Act Plays



*L*  
CONSTANCE  
D'ARCY MACKAY

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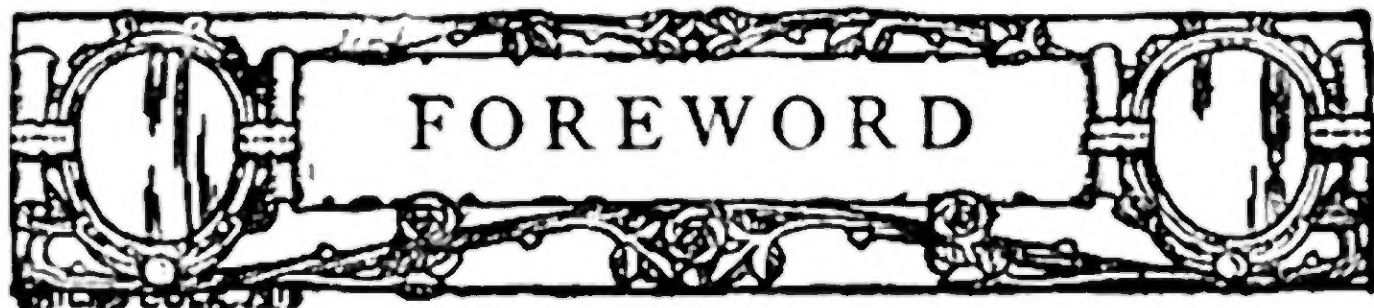
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# FOREWORD

THESE little plays will be eagerly welcomed by all who love acting both for its educative value and its social pleasure. Time and resources do not always permit the production of a five- or four-act comedy, and too many short plays lack interest and charm. These of Miss Mackay's have both, and are of quick dramatic appeal. Few actors are needed; they are easy to learn and rehearse, and they will delight their audience. The tiny just-for-an-hour theatres of home and school will rejoice in them, and, on the occasion of more elaborate dramatic entertainments, they will make excellent curtain-raisers or interludes.

There is no need to dwell upon eighteenth-century grace and elegance, and the suggestion of these qualities should not be too difficult for amateurs. Miss Mackay has given detailed descriptions of costume and setting; rightly, because the whole vivid picture is necessary before we can simplify and achieve the desired effect without too much expense. The power of suggestion, of quick arrangement of a stage picture, is a special sort of talent, and those who are getting up a play should try to enlist the services of someone who possesses it. It does not necessarily go with the faculty of acting, so should not invariably be undertaken by the stage manager. The gain of effect and the saving of time and

money will be great if the right person is found to undertake this task.

As the plays of Goldsmith and Sheridan are popular for amateur acting, and the minuet and gavotte as show dances, it is generally not difficult to borrow costumes, or they may be hired from any good theatrical costumier, or, best of all, made and added to the wardrobe of the school or college dramatic society. Eighteenth-century dress is a good thing to have, as it is constantly wanted, and men's attire, particularly, cannot easily be improvised at a moment's notice.

Any music played before or after the performance of these plays should belong to or be characteristic of the England of the eighteenth century.



## NOTE

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Other amateurs acting these plays in the British Empire should apply to Messrs. Curtis Brown, Ltd. (6 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London, W.C.2), to whom a fee of one guinea for every performance of any one play is payable. Professional actors should make special arrangements with the above-named agent.







## CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE BEAU OF BATH . . . . .	13
THE SILVER LINING . . . . .	23
ASHES OF ROSES . . . . .	39
GRETN A GREEN . . . . .	55
COUNSEL RETAINED . . . . .	67
THE PRINCE OF COURT PAINTERS . . . . .	91
EPILOGUE . . . . .	III





## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE LADY OF THE PORTRAIT . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
MISS LINLEY . . . . .	Page 56
EDMUND BURKE . . . . .	„ 68
GEORGE ROMNEY . . . . .	„ 92





# THE BEAU OF BATH







# THE BEAU OF BATH

## CHARACTERS

BEAU NASH

JEPSON, his servant

THE LADY OF THE PORTRAIT

PLACE: *Bath.*

TIME: *Christmas Eve, 1750.*

SCENE: *A room in the Beau's apartment.*

*Furniture and hangings of faded splendour. Candles gleam in silver sconces. Christmas holly hangs here and there. At the left a fire burns on the hearth, first with small blue dancing flames, then deepening to a rosy glow.*

*At the right there is an inlaid desk with candles burning on it. Toward background a door opening into another room of the apartment.*

*In the centre background hangs the life-sized portrait of a lady dressed in the fashion of the early eighteenth century. Her dress is a shimmer of rose-coloured satin. Beneath her faintly powdered hair her face is young, dawn-tinted, starry-eyed. There are no other portraits in the room.*

*At the rise of the curtain Beau Nash is discovered seated at a round lacquered table, centre foreground. He is an old man, still very erect and stately, very much*

*the great dandy. The soft light of the room hides whatever ravages of time there may be in his face. It also hides the fact that the seams of the black velvet suit he is wearing are growing grey, and that the creamy lace ruffles that grace his sleeves and jabot have been very often mended. Near him stands his servant, an old man slightly stooped, wearing a shabby brown cloth suit with a buff vest and tarnished gold buttons. He looks at his master adoringly.*

JEPSON

And is that all, sir?

BEAU NASH

Bring my snuffbox. So!

Where are the cards?

JEPSON

*(bringing a pack of cards on a silver tray)*

Here, sir.

BEAU NASH

Now you may go.

*(Jepson pauses.)*

You hesitate?

JEPSON

*(with feeling)*

Why, sir, I'm loath to see

You sitting here alone.

BEAU NASH

This room, for me,  
Is filled with memories.

JEPSON

Aye, sir, I know.  
I've served you thirty years and seen the flow  
And ebb of fortune, and I cannot bear  
Night after night to——

BEAU NASH

Jepson, all that's fair  
Passes and fades. Even the eagle's wings  
Grow slow with age. Content with little things  
Is wisest.

*[Jepson fetches a score pad and pencil from the desk,  
and stands waiting with them at his master's  
table.]*

JEPSON

Yes, sir.

BEAU NASH

*(watching fire)*

See how strangely blue  
The little flames are. *If it should be true . . .*

JEPSON

*(puzzled)*

Sir?

## BEAU NASH

That a spell is wrought by candle light  
And gleaming flame when it shines faintly bright.  
When hours grow small and embers lower burn  
On Christmas night they say old loves return.  
'Tis merely folly, Jepson. Ne'er again  
Shall I behold that brilliant courtly train  
Of wits and beauties, fops and gamesters gay—  
All that made life in Bath when I held sway.  
Time was, my nod would stop the Prince's dance:  
A belle was made by my admiring glance:  
'Twas I who set the fashions in brocade,  
But—laurels wither and the roses fade,  
And now I sit alone. My reign is done.  
The wits and fops have vanished one by one.

JEPSON

*(moved)*

You were the King of all, sir. High and low  
Admired you.

BEAU NASH

Thank you, Jepson.

*(Takes score pad and pencil.)*

You may go.

*[Exit Jepson, left, quietly and reluctantly, with a backward glance at his master who still dreams at fire.]*

Everything passes. Naught remains of all  
Except that portrait smiling from the wall.

*[He crosses to the portrait, candlestick in hand.*  
Disdainful Rosamond, you still look down  
As when you were the toast of all the town.  
Lips red as holly, eyes so archly bright——  
Nay, but your beauty dims the candle's light!

*[He puts down the candlestick.*  
'Tis vain to wish for things that may not be;  
Yet could you for one hour come back to me  
Would I not say all that I left unsaid  
In days gone by? But you are long since dead,  
While I, grown old, above the embers cower,

*[He goes back to his chair.*  
Or play a game to help me pass the hour  
When shadows flicker . . . and the candles blink  
Until I drowse . . . and . . .

*[He nods and dozes in his chair. The Lady of the  
Portrait moves, smiles, slowly and gracefully  
steps down from the portrait, silently crosses  
to the table, her eyes on the Beau. She catches  
up a handful of cards.*

### THE LADY

'Tis my play, I think,  
If I see rightly by the candle's gleam.

### BEAU NASH

*(in a whisper)*

*Rosamond!*

THE LADY

*(lightly)*

Well, sir, do you always dream  
When you play cards with ladies? If 'tis so  
I think 'twere best to call my chair and go.

BEAU NASH

*(bewildered, passing a hand across his eyes)*

I thought . . . that you were dead . . . and I was old!

THE LADY

*(still lightly)*

Fie, sir, to think that hearts like ours grow cold!  
And when I hear you call upon my name  
Shall I not step down from that gilded frame  
To spend an hour of Christmas night with you?  
Come! Let us gossip of the folk we knew!  
Lord Foppington, whose wit I did adore——

BEAU NASH

I thought Lord Foppington a monstrous bore!  
But Kitty Cavendish—— 'Faith, one mad night  
We drank her health from out her slipper white.

THE LADY

*(with spirit)*

I vow then you were tipsy, one and all,  
For Kitty's slipper was by no means small.

## BEAU NASH

Nay, let's have done with thrust and counter-thrust!  
Ah, Rosamond, in days gone by you must  
Have known I loved you, yet you were so cold.

## THE LADY

*(very low)*

I had been warmer, sir, had you been bold!

## BEAU NASH

Bold! At your feet dukes laid their coronets,  
I could but offer you some gambling debts.  
These, and the worship of a world-worn heart,  
Would scarce pass coinage in Dame Fashion's mart.  
So I fought down my love for you, and yet  
Your slightest gesture in the minuet  
Would stir my pulses. With a covert glance  
I watched you through the mazes of the dance,  
So fair, so radiant—— But what need for me  
To tell you of my heart's poor comedy?  
Is that a tear which falls for it, my sweet?

## THE LADY

*(very sweetly and gently)*

A tear is naught, sir.

*(She turns to him.)*

Ah, must I repeat  
My love in *words* before you will believe  
That I too loved in vain?

*(As their eyes meet her meaning grows clear to him.)*



Now I must leave,  
For 'tis not long until the clock strikes one.

BEAU NASH

And you loved me!

THE LADY

Our hour is almost done.  
I leave you to your firelight and your chair,  
And to your game that's always—solitaire!

*[With delicate tread, moving silently as a ghost, the Lady steps back into the portrait. The Beau dozes again. The rosy glow of the fire dies, leaving the room in utter twilight. Jepson enters.]*

JEPSON

'Tis bedtime, sir. The clock struck long ago.  
The embers on the hearth are burning low.  
Even the wav'ring candle feebly gleams.

BEAU NASH

*(with a startled glance about the shadowy room)*  
So late! . . . So dim! . . . I have been dreaming—  
Dreams!

THE CURTAIN SLOWLY FALLS

# THE SILVER LINING





# THE SILVER LINING

## CHARACTERS

FANNY BURNEY

RICHARD BURNEY, her uncle

CEPHAS, an old servant

PLACE: Chessington.

TIME: 1778.

SCENE: Library in Mr. Crisp's house.

*A pleasant room, a trifle littered with books and papers. All across the background, windows curtained in palely-flowered damask. A hearth at left, with a fire burning rosily. Brass andirons. A bellows. Near the hearth, facing audience, a dark wooden settle with a high back. It is handsomely carved and appears to be quite old. Candles in silver candlesticks are lighted on the hearth-shelf, and there are also framed silhouettes standing there.*

*At right, near background, a door opening into another room of the house. Also at left, towards foreground, a round table with a lighted candelabrum, several drawings in striking black and white. A brass inkstand, sand, quill pens, etc. All along the right wall a dark bookcase full to running over with books. Its top shelf is piled high with them. Their covers are mostly brown and musty. There are also black, dark blue and green ones, but none in bright colours.*

At the rise of the curtain Fanny Burney, rather small, delicate, with a girlishly pretty face and softly curling unpowdered hair, sits writing at the table, a small work-bag and sampler lying on her lap. She wears a pale yellow dress, flowered in white, over a pale yellow petticoat, and a white lace fichu. Black velvet ribbon at her throat and about her wrists. She is deep in her work when there is the sound of someone opening the door at right. With amazing swiftness Fanny drops her pen, sweeps the drawings over what she is writing, drops her sampler and bag on top of them, and is crocheting when her uncle, Richard Burney, enters. He is a tall, portly, ruddy man, with a most important manner. He wears a handsome plum-coloured travelling suit, and carries a long churchwarden pipe which he lights without a "by your leave" at his first opportunity.

RICHARD BURNEY

Well, Fanny!

FANNY BURNEY

(surprised)

Uncle!

RICHARD BURNEY

Cephas welcomed me.

There's no one else about as I can see.

(Fanny drops a flurried curtsey.)

Where's Mrs. Gast?

FANNY BURNEY

In bed. And Daddy Crisp  
Has gone to London.

RICHARD BURNEY

Cephas, with his lisp,  
Has so informed me. And I also know  
Your father left here just three days ago,  
So I have missed him. Lord! What a to-do!  
I'm just from town myself. Child, how are you?

FANNY BURNEY

*(prettily)*

Quite well, and hope my kinsfolk are the same.

RICHARD BURNEY

*(puffing at his pipe before the fire)*

Um. Yes.

FANNY BURNEY

What news?

RICHARD BURNEY

The whole town rings with fame  
Of a new author, who has writ a book

Called *Evelina*. Everywhere you look  
 You see it advertised. Yet no one knows  
 The author's name, and rumour madly goes  
 Naming first this one, and then that one.

FANNY BURNEY

(*passionately*)

Oh,  
 If they should ever guess! (*She grows pale.*)

RICHARD BURNEY

They're sure to know  
 Sooner or later. Burke sat up all night  
 To read it. Said if he could guess aright  
 The author's name, that fifty pounds he'd give,  
 While Dr. Johnson cried out: "As I live,  
 I can't forget the book. It's my delight!"  
 Why, Fanny! How you look! First red, then white.

FANNY BURNEY

(*trying to speak without a tremor*)

You see, in Chessington our life is dull,  
 And everything you say seems wonderful,  
 And stirs the heart like bells of London town.  
 And so this—*Katherina* wins renown?



RICHARD BURNEY

Nay, *Evelina*, so the novel's named.  
The author who has written it is famed  
Forever. 'Tis a puzzle. No one can  
Be positive who is the lucky man.  
If when I've read it I have found 'twill do  
For you to read, 'twill be permitted you.

FANNY BURNEY

(*demurely*)

Thank you.

RICHARD BURNEY

How's Charles?

FANNY BURNEY

My father's vastly well,  
And busy.

RICHARD BURNEY

Humph. I think that I could tell  
That without asking. Times are hard. I saw  
A friend of Charles' last night—young Clapperclaw,  
Who swears that Clark wrote *Evelina*. Fool!  
But when I said 'twas more like Fielding's school  
Mrs. Thrale looked at me the oddest way,

Said: " Did you get the note I sent to-day?

Go search for *Evelina* nearer home.

If you would find her you've not far to roam."

*(Fanny turns and looks at him, aghast ; but he continues placidly.)*

I think she means that Anstey's written it.

But, lord, I'm sure that he has not the wit!

Although the strangest people try to write:

Children and fools. I've not forgot the night

Your father found *you* at it, clipped your wing,

Forbade such nonsense and then burned the thing,

And brought you to your senses. Pen and ink

Are not for women, but for men who think.

Females are cackling geese. 'Tis only men

Who have the strength of mind to wield a pen.

FANNY BURNEY

*(picking up pen from table)*

And yet this pen is made from a goose feather!

RICHARD BURNEY

*(frowning)*

Well, pens and women do not go together.

A blue-stockings is a disgrace. *(Yawns.)* Heigho!

The hour grows late. I'll take my candle.

*[He crosses to table, takes candle, and pauses to pick*

*up drawings for inspection. As he lifts one it catches on the manuscript beneath, and the latter sweeps to the floor and falls with pages outspread.*

FANNY BURNEY

*(with a stifled exclamation)*

Oh!

RICHARD BURNEY

*(puzzled ; then angry)*

What's this? *(Picks up a few pages.)* Great heavens!

Fanny! Well, I swear

You *have* been writing! And you've hid it there

Behind your sampler. Wait till Charles hears this!

FANNY BURNEY

*(imploring him)*

Oh, Uncle Richard, if you'll——

RICHARD BURNEY

Silence, miss!

You should be shamed to look me in the face.

Thank God that no one else knows this disgrace.

How far has this thing gone? Come, answer me.

Who else has seen this rubbish besides me?

FANNY BURNEY

*(terrified)*

Oh, Uncle——

RICHARD BURNEY

*(with mounting rage)*

Wait till Charles and I confer!

Who else?

FANNY BURNEY

*(between sobs)*

I've sent it to a publisher.

RICHARD BURNEY

*(furiously)*

Fanny! Don't tell me you have been so bold!

FANNY BURNEY

*(sobbing wildly)*Oh, — worse — than — that! *The — book's — already —  
sold!*

RICHARD BURNEY

*(starting violently)**Sold!* Why, God bless me! Fanny, you don't say  
*That you got money for it? (He stares at her, open-*  
*mouthed.)*

FANNY BURNEY

*(with a fresh burst of tears)*

Yes, to-day

A—cheque—came——

RICHARD BURNEY

*(eagerly)*

For how much?

FANNY BURNEY

*(choked with sobs)*

Two—hundred—pounds.<sup>1</sup>

RICHARD BURNEY

*(staggered)*

Two hun—— Why, Fanny! I am dreaming! Zounds!  
When did you write?

FANNY BURNEY

*(struggling for self-control)*

A little, every day.

I covered it with samplers and crochet.

*(She wipes her eyes.)*

<sup>1</sup> This is a slight exaggeration for the sake of dramatic effectiveness.

RICHARD BURNEY

*(quite mollified)*

What's the book called?

FANNY BURNEY

*(trembling)*

'Tis *Evelina*.

RICHARD BURNEY

*(stunned)*

*You*

Wrote *Evelina*? *(Fanny nods.)* Lord! What a to-do!  
When Burke hears this! That Clapperclaw's a fool!  
*(With triumph.)*

I knew the book came from some other school!  
*(Expands as if talking to imaginary people.)*

"My niece, the authoress . . ."

FANNY BURNEY

*(approaching him humbly)*

Uncle, I know

I've been deceitful, but I loved it so—  
My book. Forgive me. I won't write again.

RICHARD BURNEY

Eh? Oh, tut, tut! I wouldn't cause you pain  
For your—er—fault.

FANNY BURNEY

*(with emotion)*

Uncle, if you could dream  
All that it meant to me, the thrill—the gleam—  
You'll never guess what dull hours I've beguiled.

RICHARD BURNEY

*(patronisingly)*

There! There! Remember you're my niece, dear child.  
One mustn't be too hard on what's one's own.

FANNY BURNEY

*(with quick gratitude)*

Oh, Uncle !

RICHARD BURNEY

*(condescendingly)*

If you want to be alone  
Sometimes, and write, I've no objection—none.

FANNY BURNEY

*(radiant)*

Uncle !

RICHARD BURNEY

*(to himself)*

And when I think how quick it's done——  
Just write a book, and make two hundred pounds!

*[Cephas appears at door, right, an old man in snuff-*



*coloured livery. He carries a candle, and an iron ring with some large keys on it.*

CEPHAS

Miss Fanny——

FANNY BURNEY

*(to her uncle)*

Cephas wants to make his rounds  
And lock the doors.

RICHARD BURNEY

Then, child, good night.

*[Fanny takes a candle from the table. Motions to Cephas to go. He exits, right, and Fanny drops a curtsey to her uncle.]*

FANNY BURNEY

Good night.

RICHARD BURNEY

*(intercepting her)*

You think that you might write some more as bright  
As *Evelina*?

FANNY BURNEY

*(modestly)*

I can try.

RICHARD BURNEY

Yes, do.

*[Again Fanny makes him a dutiful curtsey. He smiles at her benignly between puffs of smoke as he stands with his back to the fire. She exits, right, with her candle. Richard Burney puffs complacently, yet with the air of a man who must speak aloud in order to give vent to his feelings. His sentences come between enjoyable whiffs.]*

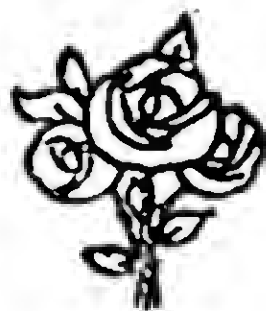
Well, even if the hussy's socks are blue  
She's my own niece. One shouldn't be repining  
To find blue stockings have a silver lining.  
The little baggage! Lord! Two hundred pounds!  
*Well, Charles can spend it fixing up his grounds!*

QUICK CURTAIN





# ASHES OF ROSES



# ASHES OF ROSES

## CHARACTERS

KITTY CLIVE

HORACE WALPOLE

PHYLLIS

ROXANE, maid to Mistress Clive

Call Boy

PLACE: London.

TIME: *A Spring night in 1741.*

SCENE: *The theatre dressing-room of Kitty Clive.*

*The bare whitewashed walls of the dressing-room are almost hidden by the softly tinted costumes that hang from their pegs. There are also shimmering cloaks, a wig or so. A mask and domino. A mock-ermine robe. In background, right, a door with a light cloak hanging on it. When this door is opened, the dingy backs of stacked scenery show dimly. Against the wall of left background a spindle-legged dressing-table glittering with silver paste boxes, brushes, smelling-salts bottles, powder boxes, all of which are reflected with double glitter in the mirror that hangs above them. Lighted candles in silver sconces jut from each side of the mirror. There are six candles in each sconce, and their illumination falls like a soft glory over the room. There are two damask chairs with gilt legs, one for Kitty Clive, and one for any chance*

visitor. The one for Kitty Clive is in front of the dressing-table. The other stands near and is covered with a frou-frou of stage dresses.

At the rise of the curtain Kitty Clive is seated at the table with Roxane in attendance. The actress is sumptuous in blue and silver brocade, worn over a white satin petticoat. Her hair is dressed very high, and is white with powder. A necklace of pearls and diamonds glitters about her throat. Her cheeks and lips are rouged. Her great eyes sparkle under pencilled eyebrows. Her hands are thick with rings. On her white satin high-heeled slippers flash the most brilliant of buckles. Her white silk stockings have silver clocks. Roxane, a slim, sprightly creature, wears an old-rose dress looped over an old-rose and white-striped petticoat. A white kerchief and a frilled white cap on her dark hair. A saucy white apron. She holds a hare's foot mounted in silver and a silver patch-box.

#### CLIVE

Quick with the hare's foot! Lud, your hands are slow!  
Nay, I spoke sharply. Next the patches. So!  
Fasten this bit of ribbon to the right,  
And set this diamond crescent well in sight.  
Then for this sidewise curl more powder bring.  
How look I now?

#### ROXANE

Mistress, as fair as Spring.

CLIVE

"As fair as Spring!" God, what an age ago  
Since Spring and I were friends! I used to know  
The banks whereon the early violets grew,  
Lifting their little faces deeply blue—  
Yet no more deeply blue than a lad's eyes  
In those sweet days ere town had made me wise,  
Ere I had learned that flattery hides a dart,  
And fame feeds vanity, but not the heart. . . .  
Oh, those far days. . . .

*(She speaks more to herself than to Roxane.)*

ROXANE

*(as a rap sounds on the door)*

Mistress!

CLIVE

*(rousing herself)*

'Tis Walpole's rap.

Bid him come in.

*Roxane opens the door. Walpole enters, a distinguished-looking man with great charm of manner. He wears a suit of grey satin with the customary ruffles and flowered waistcoat. His tricorne hat is tucked under his arm. His powdered wig is almost as elaborate as that of Clive herself.*

I knew you by your tap!

*[She does not rise, but extends her hand, which he kisses gallantly.]*



WALPOLE

My tap is ever at the *Queen and Star*.

CLIVE

Fie, Horace! What a flatterer you are!  
How many occupations you must fit,  
To start as tapster and to end as wit!  
A courtier also!

WALPOLE

Never that with you.

CLIVE

(to Roxane)

Go wait, Roxane, and call me ere my cue.

[*Exit Roxane. Clive turns to Walpole with genuine feeling.*]

My deep, true friend. There are not many such.

WALPOLE

Pensive, sweet Kit?

CLIVE

(*affecting to be busy with powder puff and hare's foot*)

Nay, Horace, 'tis the touch  
Of an old sadness that the waking year

Wakes in my heart. We mouth and stutter here,  
Snatching such tinsel as the town may fling,  
While out beyond the city it is spring . . .  
Spring in the country lanes where lovers stray,  
Spring! And the Devon hedgerows white with May!  
Hedgerows of Devon! (*Turns to Walpole.*) Friend, there  
used to be

A lad who walked in those green lanes with me  
And spoke of love. But I—I heard the town  
Calling me with a voice that would not down.  
I heard. I followed. London gave me fame,  
And all has changed since then—my life, my name.  
And yet I think I never can forget  
The garden where we parted. It was set  
With sweetbriar roses. 'Faith, I know not why  
I tell you fragments of a day gone by,—  
Save that he said: "Dearheart, lest you return,  
A light shall ever in that window burn  
Through all the years." He had no subtle art,  
My country lover. Yet, against my heart  
To-night—his rose!

*[Takes a faded rose from the bosom of her dress.]*

Oh, Horace, you who know  
How vain and false and empty is the show,  
How foul the fawning, and how barbed the wit,  
Think me not mad to say farewell to it!—  
To quit the footlights for that candle's gleam,  
To seek that simple faith of which I dream,  
And find that the world lost for love is best——

ROXANE

*(rapping briskly and then entering)*

Mistress, a country zany, strangely dressed,  
Would speak with you. She comes from Devon way.

CLIVE

*(instantly interested)*

From Devon? Bid her enter.

WALPOLE

*(rising)*

I'll not stay.

Adieu, sweet Clive.

CLIVE

*(to herself)*

From Devon!

*(Suddenly perceives that Walpole is going, and makes him an abstracted curtsey.)*

Oh, adieu! [*Exit Walpole.*

*Enter Phyllis, a young girl, with a sweet, rustic look. She wears a pale yellow muslin dress faintly sprigged with white and a little pale yellow straw poke bonnet,*

*with pale yellow strings tied under her chin. Long lace mitts. A little white woollen cloak with swans-down edging. From beneath the shade of her poke bonnet her eyes look out with childlike earnestness. She regards Clive with timid awe.*

## PHYLLIS

My name is Phyllis. May I speak with you?

## CLIVE

*(looking at her with great interest)*

Aye, child. Speak freely.

## PHYLLIS

*(shyly eager)*

Last night at the play  
I watched you. 'Twas so wondrous. You could sway  
The house to tears or laughter, swift as flame!  
And so (though father knows it not) I came  
To-night to ask your counsel. You who know  
The secrets of the heart—its joy, its woe——

*[Clive's first interest has waned a little. She goes on with her toilet, yet speaks very kindly and patiently to Phyllis.]*

CLIVE

Speak, child. But give me not too hard a task.

PHYLLIS

*(gaining courage)*

Oh, Mistress, 'tis not for myself I ask!  
'Tis for a friend——

CLIVE

*(absorbed with the art of her patch-box)*

A friend——

PHYLLIS

*(hurriedly)*

He lives alone

In a thatched cottage that is near our own,  
And has a curious, rambling garden set  
With sweetbriar roses——

CLIVE

*(momentarily startled : then recovering herself)*

Roses? I forget——

Proceed, my child.

PHYLLIS

*(with courage)*

And by a window pane  
Each night, for years, through starlight and through rain  
Has shone a lighted candle.

CLIVE

*(motionless)*

Ah!

PHYLLIS

*(artlessly)*

They say  
That years ago his true love went her way  
To London town: and lest she should return  
And find the way all dark, he needs must burn  
That welcome gleam. Though she was fain to roam,  
He felt that beacon light would guide her home.

CLIVE

*(deeply moved)*

*Home!*

PHYLLIS

*(timidly)*

Was it not a tender thing to do?

CLIVE

*(deeply)*

Aye.

PHYLLIS

*(ardently)*

Oh, there seldom beats a heart so true.  
He loved her always.

CLIVE

*(in a thrilled voice, staring a-dream at something  
Phyllis does not see)*

*Always! . . .*

PHYLLIS

Until now.

Mistress, indeed I scarce can tell you how  
He came to care for me, his neighbour's child.  
I doubted that he meant it. But he smiled  
And said that after storm came peace and rest.  
Great loves flamed high, but simple loves were best,  
And sound of children's voices and a fire  
Lit on the hearth for autumn days—— I tire  
You with my selfish chatter, Mistress?

CLIVE

*(her face a mask)*

Nay.

*(Searchingly.)*

You love him?

PHYLLIS

*(with genuine passion)*

Oh, more deep than words can say!

Yet ever through my heart there runs a fear—

If we were wed, that love of yester-year

Might sometime lift the latch, and put to flight

His heart's deep peace—set memory's torch alight—

Re-ope the old wound, and the old, old pain——

CLIVE

*(after a moment)*

You need not fear—she'll not return again.

PHYLLIS

You think she will not—you who are so wise

In the world's ways and see with such clear eyes—

You think she will not?

CLIVE

*(faintly smiling)*

I am quite, quite sure.



PHYLLIS

*(radiantly)*

Oh, Mistress, for such counsel words are poor  
To give in thanks.

CLIVE

*(rising wearily, her face beneath its paint suddenly  
grown old)*

Nay, child. No thanks, I pray.  
But sometimes . . . when the year is white with  
May . . .  
Remember me.

*[Phyllis suddenly bends and kisses Clive's hand,  
shyly impulsive and adoring. Clive lays the  
other hand for a moment gently on the girl's  
shoulder, looking at the youth of her, and then  
dismisses her with a light imperious gesture.]*

Now go, child. *[Exit Phyllis.]*

CALL BOY'S VOICE

*(without)*

Ready, all!

ROXANE

*(entering breathlessly and with importance)*

Mistress, they wait. It is the curtain call—  
The curtain call—— And there's the prompter's  
bell——!

## CLIVE

*(looking at a faded sweetbriar rose which she has taken from the bosom of her dress, and which now crumbles to dust under her touch, sifting like ashes through her fingers to the floor.)*

Strange—for a moment since the curtain fell!

## CURTAIN





GRETTA GREEN



MISS LINLEY  
*(After the portrait by Humphrey)*



# GRETNA GREEN

## CHARACTERS

MARIA LINLEY (secretly betrothed to Richard Brinsley Sheridan)

THOMAS LINLEY, her father

AVIS LINLEY, her aunt

PLACE: *Bath.*

TIME: 1772.

SCENE: *The Linleys' home.*

*A room that is a trifle shabby, furnished in the eighteenth century manner. Spindle-legged chairs upholstered in faded damask.*

*In the centre background a door opening on the road without. Windows each side of it curtained with pale blue muslin flowered with pink roses. Under the window at right a spinet with music on the open rack, and piles of music placed on top of the spinet itself.*

*At left a hearth with a fire burning. Toward background a door.*

*At right, against the wall, an inlaid spindle-legged writing-desk and chair.*

*Toward the centre of the room, left, and facing audience, a winged chair upholstered in flowered chintz.*

*Toward the centre of the room, right, also facing audience, a chintz-covered spindle-legged chair.*

*At the rise of the curtain Avis Linley is seated with a sampler in her hand on chair, left, while near her at*

right sits Maria Linley, with a book in her hand. Branched candlesticks on hearthshelf and spinet shed a soft radiance over the room. From outside the autumn wind is heard blowing in fitful gusts.

Avis Linley, who has fallen asleep over her work, is a woman of almost fifty, slender and upright as a willow wand. Her hair, faintly touched with grey, waves over a broad white brow. Her face, clear-cut as a cameo, is faintly tinged with pink. She wears a dress of pale blue chintz opening over a white petticoat. Maria Linley, her niece, has her aunt's clear-cut cameo-like features, the same delicate flush on her face. She is young, charming, and in spite of her success in public rather diffident, with the manner of one who stands in positive fear of her elders. She is reading aloud as the curtain rises, and her voice suggests the singer. It is full, sweet, resonant. She wears a white dress flowered in scarlet roses over a scarlet quilted petticoat. Her dark hair is unpowdered.

MARIA  
(reading)

“But all this happened very long ago  
In Greece's golden age, when to and fro  
Walked nymphs and shepherds, Phyllis, Corydon,  
And strange cold elves on whom the pale moon  
shone——”

[She pauses. Then in the same low musical voice  
essays to call her aunt, leaning forward half-  
timidly as she does so.

Aunt Avis! Oh, Aunt Avis! She's asleep!  
Perhaps if I go droning on she'll keep  
So. But how can I read when thoughts roam far!  
Oh, let my pent heart speak the things that are—  
And substitute my own words for this book.

*[She still holds the book, and continues to speak  
lullingly, as if she still read aloud.]*

The lines all run together when I look.  
I will pretend to read and lull her sleep,  
Nor dare to stop. Have I the strength to creep  
Up to my room, and there prepare to go?  
I never knew an hour to pass so slow!  
And Richard said we were to meet at ten  
And take the chaise for Gretna Green. Or then,  
If that should fail, we'll cross the sea to France.  
And either way 'tis Richard and Romance!  
Poor Aunt! *(Looks at her.)* What lover ever sighed  
for her?

I'm sure she never felt the least, least stir  
Of joy or hope. Why, all her time is spent  
In making elder wine, or liniment,  
Or playing on the harpsichord some tune  
As faded as herself. I think she'd swoon  
If she could guess what is afoot to-night.  
Or else she'd tell my father. That's a plight  
That I grow pale to think on. Nay, 'tis time  
That I were going—— *(Clock strikes.)* There's the  
half-hour's chime,

*(Looks cautiously at her aunt.)*



And aunt still sleeps! Well, those who love must dare.  
I can creep past again behind her chair  
And lift the latch as quiet as a mouse.

*(She puts down her book, after rising quietly.)*

Listen! There's not a stir in all the house!  
Father must be abed. I'll fetch my cloak.

*[She pauses, centre. Her aunt still sleeps soundly. Watching her, with great caution Maria tiptoes to the door at left, and exits. For a moment her aunt continues to slumber, then slowly opens her eyes, drowsily stifles a yawn, and speaks sleepily.]*

#### AVIS

Child, did I doze?

*[Hearing no answer she looks at Maria's vacant chair, and speaks with the confusion of sleep still upon her.]*

I thought that someone spoke!  
I must have dreamed it. *(Yawns drowsily.)* Though  
the wind blows drear  
The autumn stars shine frostily and clear. . . .

*[She rises, takes her work, and pauses to look out the window at right. Maria steals in on tiptoe, ready for departure. She is fastening a scarlet cloak with a hood, and does not perceive her aunt till she is almost at the outer door.]*

#### AVIS

Child!

MARIA

*(greatly startled)*

Why, Aunt Avis!

AVIS

Can I trust my sight!

That hood! That cloak! And at this time of night!

MARIA

*(falteringly)*

I do protest 'twas but to take the air  
For a brief moment.

AVIS

*(with meaning)*

Or a coach and pair.

MARIA

*(aghast : faltering)*

A coach—and—— Oh, Aunt Avis! Who has told?

AVIS

*(composedly)*

Why, no one, child. I am not yet too old  
To read the signs where signs are to be seen,  
And this sign plainly points to Gretna Green.

MARIA

*(to herself : more and more amazed)*

To Gretna Green! And yet she does not swoon!

AVIS

*(quietly)*

'Tis well you chose a night without a moon.  
Yet why go thus?

MARIA

*(on the verge of tears)*

There was no other way;  
For Richard spoke to father yesterday.  
I listened, trembling, and my father said  
That he would never see his daughter wed  
To anyone as portionless and poor  
As Richard Sheridan. *(Sobs.)* Or so *obscure*.

AVIS

And was this all?

MARIA

Yes, all. Naught else, I swear.  
So it was either Gretna or despair.  
Dick said: "At ten!" And I could not refuse——

AVIS

The chaise——! At ten! Then you've no time to lose!

MARIA

*(utterly bewildered)*

"No time to lose——!" Oh, she's gone quite, quite mad!

*[Avis crosses swiftly to desk. Opens drawer. Takes out a jewelled trinket and money. Crosses to her niece.]*

AVIS

Here, child, is a small trinket that I had  
When I was young. 'Tis for a wedding gift.  
And these few sovereigns may make a rift  
Of cheerful sunshine on some rainy day.

MARIA

*(with passionate gratitude)*

Aunt Avis!

*[A step is heard at left.]*

AVIS

Nay, be quick! You must not stay!  
Your father's coming. Kiss me, child. Adieu!  
All my heart's love and blessings go with you.

*[Exit Maria, centre. Avis has just time to snatch up her work when Thomas Linley enters. He is a lordly person in a suit of dark brown velvet. He crosses at once to fire.]*

LINLEY

Zounds! Not in bed yet, Avis?

*(He stands, rubbing his hands.)*

We'll have snow.

*(Yawns.)*

On such a night—full thirty years ago—  
Do you remember—you were fain to run  
To Gretna with that linendraper's son?

AVIS

Yes, I remember.

LINLEY

*(with self-satisfaction)*

And I stopped the chaise,  
And brought you back.

AVIS

To empty, loveless days.

Yes, I remember.

LINLEY

*(yawning)*

Where's Maria?

AVIS

*(with subdued fire)*

*Safe!*

LINLEY  
(*a bit startled*)

What do you mean?

AVIS  
Why, brother, how you chafe  
At the *least* word. Where *should* Maria be?

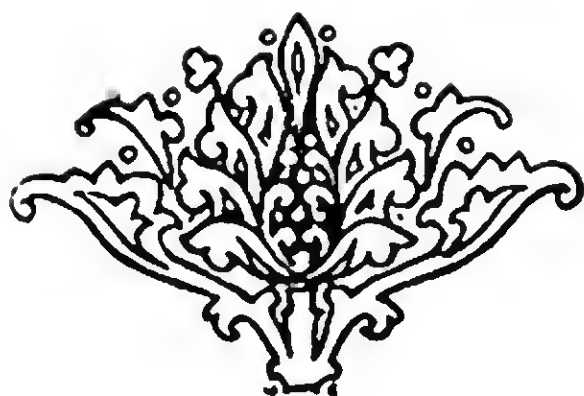
LINLEY  
Lord, the young baggage dares not cope with me!  
I'm master of my own.  
*[There comes the sound of wheels passing without.*  
Zounds, Avis! Hark!  
What's that without?

AVIS  
The wind wails through the dark.

LINLEY  
But I heard sounds above the wind's shrill cry.

AVIS  
Naught but the post-chaise, brother, passing by.

QUICK CURTAIN



COUNSEL RETAINED





EDMUND BURKE  
*(From the portrait by George Romney)*



# COUNSEL RETAINED

## CHARACTERS

PEG WOFFINGTON

RICHARD GREVILLE

EDMUND BURKE

Some unseen gallants, admirers of Peg Woffington

PLACE: London.

TIME: 1750. *A cold Spring night.*

SCENE: *The apartment of Edmund Burke.*

*A room that gives evidence of extreme poverty. It is on the ground floor of what was once a fine mansion, but is now a lodging-house dreary and down-at-heel. At background, left, a French window with rusty lock and broken panes, one of which is stuffed with an old hat. At right background a couch with a faded and tattered damask cover.*

*At left centre a hearth with a low fire. Andirons. A battered iron kettle on a hob. A dilapidated hearth broom. Drawn near the hearth and facing audience a high-backed chair with arms, the remains of what was once a fine carved piece of furniture. Tossed over the back of it a lawyer's black gown, very frayed.*

*At right, near background, a door opening into the hall of the house. Near foreground a cupboard with a few dishes, etc.*

*In the centre of the room a black table with an iron strong-box, a pile of battered law books, briefs, portfolios, papers. A chair drawn up to the right of this.*

*On the table and mantelshelf are stubs of candles, two in battered pewter candlesticks, and one in the neck of a bottle.*

*At the rise of the curtain the room is in absolute darkness, save for the red spark of the fire burning jewel-like in the gloom. A moment afterwards a hand from without tries the lock of the French window, and wrenches the window open. A woman in a dark cloak enters quickly, and lets in a flood of spring moonlight that falls in a broad shaft across the floor. She has no time to close the window, but steps quickly into the shadows by the fire, and stands silent and motionless, her face hidden by the hood of her cloak. From outside comes an excited tumult of men's voices.*

#### FIRST VOICE

*Peg! Mistress Woffington!*

*[Richard Greville steps through the window, a fine-looking young dandy in king's-blue velvet, with white wig, small sword, flashing shoe-buckles. He gives a quick look about him, does not perceive the hooded figure and speaks back through the window.]*

#### GREVILLE

*She isn't here.*

*[With another quick glance round the room.]*

Some pettifogger's lodgings. Gad! It's clear  
That she won't let us chair her through the town.

VOICES  
(*without*)

Huzzah for Woffington!

FIRST VOICE  
Come on!

SECOND VOICE

We'll drown  
Our ardour at the *Crown* or *Serpentine*.

[*This is hailed with a cheer that instantly grows  
fainter as its givers move rapidly away.*]

WOFFINGTON

(*with involuntary indignation*)

What! Will they drown my memory in wine!

GREVILLE

(*surprised and entranced*)

Peg!

## WOFFINGTON

*(sharply)*

S-sh, I tell you! I will not be found.  
Wait till they leave. I'm weary of this round  
Of cheering and torchlight. Let me be.

*[As she sinks into the chair near hearth the moonlight shows her wonderful mobile face. The sparkle of excitement and the immortal youth of the artist make her look younger than she really is. She gives the effect of being not more than two-and-twenty. Her thin black silk hooded cloak lined in flame-scarlet satin falls back and reveals that over a black taffeta petticoat she wears an overdress of black gauze on which are thickly embroidered broad love-knots of silver. She has a black lace scarf caught with a huge scarlet rose. Above the darkness of her dress her neck rises superbly white. She wears no jewels. Her dark hair is unpowdered. Her little slippers are of the finest make, and rest lightly on the ground like two black butterflies. They are without buckles.]*

## GREVILLE

*(bending over her)*

Why, Peg! Sweet Woffington!

WOFFINGTON

*(closing her eyes for a moment and leaning back  
wearily in the chair)*

Ah, can't you see  
An actress may grow tired? I'm fagged to death!  
*[Sudden impish humour lights her face. She opens  
her eyes.]*

Besides, you know, I wish to save my breath;  
I want a *little* left with which to speak.  
My case against Miss Spleen comes off next week.

GREVILLE

Gad! So it does. I'm stupid to forget.  
Have you engaged your counsel?

WOFFINGTON

Nay, not yet.

Sure, Mr. Greville, I have had no time.  
*(Sagely.)*

But I'll be ready when the hour shall chime.

GREVILLE

Who will you take?

WOFFINGTON

*(with a gleam)*

'Faith, set your mind at rest.  
*I'll choose the one who can defend me best!*  
Be sure of that.

GREVILLE

How did you *come* here?

WOFFINGTON

I

Stepped in to let the crowd go sweeping by,  
And did what women can do when they will.

GREVILLE

And what was that?

WOFFINGTON

*(with a deliberate brogue)*

I managed to keep still!

GREVILLE

*(glancing scornfully about the room)*

Who do you think can own this—caravan?

WOFFINGTON

Sure, I don't know. It must be some poor man  
Who's having a hard time to make things meet.  
Well, may kind fortune set him on his feet!  
I was poor once. *(Pensively.)*

## VOICES

*(in distance, without)*

Huzzah!

## WOFFINGTON

I must stay here  
Until the streets without begin to clear.  
Fetch me a chair. Come back in half an hour.  
Meanwhile I'll rest.

## GREVILLE

I will obey.

## WOFFINGTON

*(slight brogue)*

More power

To you, Dick Greville.

*[Greville smiles delightedly, kisses her hand, and exits through French window, which he half closes, so that Woffington is left partly in light, partly in shadow. The moment he is gone a key turns in the lock of the door, right. Woffington starts, looks towards door, and draws her cloak about her, prepared for flight if flight prove necessary. Edmund Burke enters, young, shabby, careworn, wearing a black suit and a*



*black cloak seen sharply for a moment as he takes a flint from his pocket and tries to strike a light. He has not seen Woffington, who instantly draws his old gown about her, and slips her arms into its sleeves. She stoops forward, rubs her handkerchief in the ash that has sifted out beyond the hearth, puts a smirch of it on her hands, tucks her feet under her, and huddling deep in the chair assumes a forlorn look, closing her eyes. She has slyly managed to pick up the hearth broom, and it lies against her knee. She might, seen in the shadow, be a crossing sweeper instead of an actress. Meanwhile Burke has lighted the stump of candle standing in the neck of a bottle. As soon as it is lit he looks about and sees Woffington.*

BURKE

*(astonished)*

What is this?

WOFFINGTON

*(with the effect of astonishment, bewilderment, the "Where am I?" look of a person just wakened)*

Why, oh!—

*[She looks at him in consternation, pretends to gather her wits together. Speaks coaxingly, as one afraid of a reprimand.]*

There was a crowd outside, and so—and so—  
I stepped in here a moment, and 'twas warm,  
And I dozed off——

BURKE

I'm sure you meant no harm.

*[He crosses, closes the window, but does not try to lock it. Then goes to hearth and lights the stumps of candles on the hearthshelf.]*

WOFFINGTON

*(very Irish throughout)*

None in the least, sir.

BURKE

And your name is——

WOFFINGTON

Meg

Some people call me, and the others Peg.  
I like Meg best.

*[She looks at him with the engagingness of a gamin.]*

BURKE

*(kindly)*

Well, Meg, I greatly fear  
That I can only offer you small cheer.

WOFFINGTON

I don't mind that.

BURKE

Stale bread, stale cheese, scant light.

*[He has crossed to cupboard, right, and while he goes on talking to her sets between them on the table cracked plates, a loaf of bread, and some cheese.]*

What do you do?

WOFFINGTON

*(with an inspiration)*

I—sweep the boards at night!

BURKE

A crossing sweeper?

WOFFINGTON

*(looking down at his cloak)*

'Faith, I know 'twas bold  
To take this cloak: but I was tired and cold,  
And I——

BURKE

*(with a whimsical glance at his supper table)*

Ah, the poor know the poor. Sit still.

WOFFINGTON

You're very kind.

BURKE

I know how night can chill  
The very marrow.

WOFFINGTON

Are you Irish, too?

BURKE

Yes.

WOFFINGTON

*(slowly)*

If it's not—asking too much of you,  
What is your name, sir?

BURKE

Burke. Unknown to fame.  
Just Edmund Burke.

WOFFINGTON

*(sagely)*

That's a good Irish name.  
And it will bring you luck. Now, tell me true,  
What do you need most?

BURKE

Clients. One or two  
Friends in the great world.

WOFFINGTON

Have you none?

BURKE

Nay, none.

WOFFINGTON

*(encouragingly)*

Keep up your heart. Perhaps you'll meet with one.

BURKE

*(kindly)*

Why, thank you, Meg.

WOFFINGTON

You're welcome.

BURKE

*(bowing)*

My bread and cheese?

Will you share  
*[They begin to eat.]*

WOFFINGTON

You offer me your fare

As if I were a lady!

BURKE

Aren't you?

Isn't a lady one whose words ring true  
From a kind heart?

WOFFINGTON

There's Mistress Woffington—  
She's kind, they say, and yet she isn't one.

BURKE

*(indulgently)*

Isn't a lady?

WOFFINGTON

You have seen her?

BURKE

Yes.

As Harry Wildair, wearing a boy's dress  
With youthful swagger! Lovely! Debonair!  
The darling of the wits!

WOFFINGTON

*(dryly : with malice)*

Then I dare swear  
You've never seen her in her right clothes?

BURKE

No,

Not yet.

WOFFINGTON

But, sir——

BURKE

The times are hard, and so——

*[He looks down regretfully at his shabby clothes, and  
makes a rueful gesture.]*

When I've more silver I shall go each night.

WOFFINGTON

*(with deep conviction)*

You'd spend your good coin on a worthless sight.  
She's just an actress.

*[She manages to keep her hands in the shadow.]*

BURKE

*(quietly)*

Tell me what you mean.

WOFFINGTON

*(with the proper amount of hesitation)*

Well, on the stage, sir, she may be a queen,  
But off the stage——! A zany, underbred,  
Without a scrap of learning in her head.

BURKE

*(indignantly)*

And I suppose her beauty's false as well?

WOFFINGTON

Sure, they do say (though you can never tell!)  
That underneath the powder and the paint  
You'll find a—*something that is not a saint.*

BURKE

*(furious)*

Be silent!

*[He rises, pale with anger.]*



WOFFINGTON

Oh, is Woffington your friend?  
Sure, sir, I had no meaning to offend.

BURKE

*(more quietly)*

Peg Woffington is not a friend of mine.  
I saw her once upon the stage. So fine,  
So true an artist that the gossips slur  
Her name through arrant jealousy of her

*[With growing power.]*

Who is as far above them as the light  
Of the first stars. Her genius burns as bright  
As does Orion. Can you look at her——

WOFFINGTON

*(to herself)*

I often do!

BURKE

*(sweeping on, unheeding)*

—without a great heart-stir  
Of Irish pride, to think what high renown  
Is worn by lovely Peg of Dublin Town?

*[All the fire that will one day be his flames through  
his words.]*

From Ireland, land of all that's brave and sweet. . . .

WOFFINGTON

*(provocatively)*

Famed for its lawyers, actresses, and—peat!

*[He turns from her indignantly.]*

Sure, don't be angry. I am Irish, too.

BURKE

*(turning to her)*

Take shame, then, to yourself, to think that you  
Speak lightly of Peg Woffington——

WOFFINGTON

*(suddenly standing up, returning to her natural voice and manner, and tossing off his cloak so that the black and silver and scarlet of her costume shows up wondrously in the candlelight)*

Nay, hold!

I think I know all that I need be told!

*I'll choose the one who can defend me best!*

BURKE

*(with icy pride)*

Madam, I'm glad that we have proved a jest  
To pass your time, my poverty and I.

WOFFINGTON

*(with a cry)*

How can you think that!

BURKE

*(bowing sardonically)*

And the moments fly  
When one is well amused. I trust that you  
Have spent your evening profitably. Do  
Remember me at court. *[He bows again.]*

WOFFINGTON

I shall, sir!

*[They have been too engrossed with their own emotions  
to notice Greville, who has opened the window  
and stepped in.]*

GREVILLE

Peg,

I've brought your chair.

BURKE

*(suddenly looking at her indignantly)*

You said your name was Meg.

## WOFFINGTON

*(with a return of her gamin accent)*

Well, Meg or Peg, 'tis very much the same:

And even Shakespeare says: "What's in a name?"

*[Again the fine lady.]*

Mr. Burke, Mr. Greville.

*[Stiff bows. Woffington indicates Burke.]*

He's the one

Who's to be lawyer for Peg Woffington.

*[Indicates herself.]*

## BURKE

*(staring at her, fascinated)*

Peg Woffington—you don't mean——

## WOFFINGTON

*(laughing)*

Man, you're blind!

I'm Peg!

*[She sweeps him a curtsey.]*

## BURKE

And I, who said you were unkind

To mock me——

WOFFINGTON

Find a client here instead!

The suit's against Miss Spleen. Say what you said  
To Meg, the crossing sweeper, and all will be well.  
Good night.

*[Greville pauses, waiting for her at the window.]*

BURKE

*(gazing at her)*

Good night. Your beauty's like a spell  
That holds thanks tongue-tied.

WOFFINGTON

*(drolly)*

Wouldn't you have known  
We both kissed Ireland's gem—the Blarney Stone!

*[Curtseys.]*

Good night, then.

*[The men bow to each other, and Woffington starts to join Greville. Then turns impetuously, runs back to the table, tears the crimson rose from her dress, kisses it lightly and tosses it to the table with a charming gesture.]*

Here's success! And great renown!

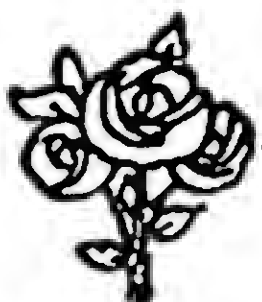
*[She runs back, and exits hastily by way of the*

*window, Greville following. Burke stands for an instant looking after her. Then he lifts the rose to his lips.*

## BURKE

Peg Woffington! The rose of Dublin Town.

*[He stands, smiling dreamily at the rose as the curtain falls.]*





THE PRINCE OF  
COURT PAINTERS





GEORGE ROMNEY  
*(From the portrait by himself)*



# THE PRINCE OF COURT PAINTERS

## CHARACTERS

GEORGE ROMNEY (the Prince of Court Painters)

MARY ROMNEY, his wife

LUCY ELDRIDGE, a neighbour's child

PLACE: *A village in the north of England.*

TIME: 1799.

SCENE: *Mary Romney's home.*

*The living-room of a peasant-like cottage which, with its dark floor and walls of time-stained wood, and its great rafters, suggests the seventeenth rather than the eighteenth century.*

*In centre background a dark oak door opens on a wild bit of moorland stretching towards the western skyline. On each side of this door long narrow latticed windows swinging inward, and curtained with faintly flowered muslin.*

*At left a wide-mouthed hearth built of cobblestones. Iron andirons and an iron kettle on a hob. On the hearth-shelf candles in pewter candlesticks, and a plate or two. Everywhere simplicity and frugality is manifest. A dark wooden settle by fire, facing audience.*

*A dark-stained table in the centre of the room. It is round, and made of plain wood. There are also in*

other parts of the room some quaint sturdy chairs of dark wood set against the wall.

Against the right wall a dark oak cupboard, containing earthenware dishes, and a little food—such as a loaf of wheaten bread, butter, cheese, and honey. Beyond this a churn, and a spinning wheel for Mary Romney's use.

At the rise of the curtain a low fire is burning on the hearth, and through the open door and western windows the light of late afternoon shines on Mary Romney as she sits at her spinning wheel, right. She is not a young woman, but age has touched her lightly. Her figure is still straight and supple. Her snow-white hair only adds to the charming effect of the ivory pallor of her face. Her eyes have retained their look of youth, of a spirit that is never done hoping. There is about her an air of gentle strength. She wears a dress of dove-grey homespun, with a white linen kerchief crossed on her breast. She has no trinkets or adornments of any kind, and needs none. As the curtain rises she is singing, her voice blending pleasantly with the hum of the wheel.

### MARY ROMNEY

"Rest! Rest! Twilight is best. The day's storms die.  
Sleep. Sleep. White stars will keep their watch on high."

[While Mary Romney sings, Lucy Eldridge appears on the threshold. She is a small child of seven or eight years. She wears a high-waisted frock of white muslin, plainly made, and white stockings with low black slippers laced with black

*ribbon above her ankles. On her head a mob-cap of white swiss. She carries a little wicker basket with flowers in it.*

MARY ROMNEY

*(rising)*

Come in.

LUCY

*(entering)*

What do you sing?

MARY ROMNEY

A lullaby

That sends tired children off to sleep.

LUCY

*(presenting flowers)*

You've none,

You live alone—away from everyone.

But I love you. And that is why I came.

MARY ROMNEY

Thank you, dear Lucy.

LUCY

And I love your name.

Just "Mary Romney." *(Dwells on it musically.)* I've  
heard people say

That someone married you, and went away.  
 His name was Romney, too. And then you left  
 The place where you were living.

MARY ROMNEY

What a weft  
 Do gossips weave! With what threads is it strung!

LUCY

*(innocently sage)*

It happened long ago, when you were young.  
 I heard it all. Something to you was sent.  
 And since that time both food and warmth you've spent  
 On the world's poor. Who are the world's poor?

MARY ROMNEY

*(quietly)*

Those

To whom life gives the thorn, but not the rose.

LUCY

I do not understand.

MARY ROMNEY

How should you, dear!

LUCY

*(coaxingly, leaning against Mary Romney's knee)*

Tell me about "When you were young."

MARY ROMNEY

I fear

I cannot. *(Staring before her.)* Why, to think of such a  
thingIs like a dream. Black as the raven's wing  
My hair was then.

LUCY

And were your cheeks as pink  
As Mother's are?

MARY ROMNEY

Yes. Is it strange to think  
That I was young once? Ah, time's wind can blow  
The reddest roses into flowers of snow.

LUCY

*(puzzled)*

Like winter?

MARY ROMNEY

Aye.

LUCY

*(innocently)*

Was he—was Romney old  
And cross like Gaffer Matthew? Did he scold?

MARY ROMNEY

*(deeply)*

No.

*[She forgets Lucy. Her face is lit by an inner flame.]*

He was young—young as the morning star,  
And blithe as spring. *(With sudden quiet.)* But, child,  
those days are far:  
Too far to talk about.

*[Lucy turns reluctantly and takes her basket.]*

Dear, must you go?

LUCY

My Mother says my feet are always slow  
Upon the homeward way.

*[Mary Romney crosses to cupboard, takes out a pat  
of butter and a little tart.]*

MARY ROMNEY

*(indicating Lucy's basket)*

Child, will this hold  
A little pat of butter, bright as gold,  
And a small tart?

LUCY

I thank you.

MARY ROMNEY

Now run home.

I would not have you linger through the gloam.

*[She kisses Lucy, who exits sedately, carrying her basket. For a moment Mary Romney leans by the door watching her, then she returns to her wheel. The light of afternoon has faded into the glow of sunset. As Mary Romney sits at her wheel a shadow falls across the doorway. She looks up and sees a slim dark man, worn, but not bent with age. His hair is grizzled, and hangs loosely about his pale passionate face. He wears a weatherworn black cloak and black suit. A broad felt hat, with dilapidated brim, a very scarecrow of a hat. From under its brim the haunted eyes of the man look out like the eyes of a lost soul. Fatigue, hunger, despair have set their thumb-mark on him. He belongs to the Lost Legion of the world. Under his arm he carries a battered portfolio of black leather worn grey with time and exposure. No one would ever guess this apparition to be Romney. Least of all does Romney's wife guess it. Too many years have come and gone since their last meeting.]*



## ROMNEY

Could you give shelter to a traveller  
So worn and weary that he scarce can stir  
Another foot along the road?

*[Mary rises and looks at him pityingly.]*

I fear  
That I have startled you. And yet—look clear  
And see what begs a refuge! Bone and shred  
Can scarce work harm to any. *[He coughs.]*

## MARY ROMNEY

*(with swift compassion)*

Warmed and fed  
You shall be.

## ROMNEY

Thank you—greatly.

*[He crosses weakly to the fire. Mary crosses to the cupboard and brings him a plate of bread and a cup of cordial.]*

## MARY ROMNEY

Sit you down.  
Often do folk pass by here from the town,  
Early and late, and though I live alone  
I never have had cause to fear.

ROMNEY

*(sits, leaning back, spent)*

A stone

Is what the world gives when you ask for bread;  
Yet you give this——

MARY ROMNEY

Eat, and be comforted.

*(Cheerily.)*

“Darkest before the dawn,” the old wives say.

ROMNEY

I am a traveller who has lost his way,  
And followed *ignis fatuus* till the night  
Closed in on me, and left me without light.

MARY ROMNEY

*(to herself)*

He wanders.

ROMNEY

*(half-hearing her)*

Aye. Oh, I have wandered far,  
And thought the dancing wisp-light was a star,  
The light called “Art.”

MARY ROMNEY

You are an artist? (*He bows.*) Then  
You must have heard of him!

*[Her voice thrills with pride.]*

ROMNEY

Him?

MARY ROMNEY

Whom all men  
Praise. The great Romney.  
*[The name transfigures her.]*

ROMNEY

He is great no more.  
Why, I have heard he goes from door to door  
Glad of a little charity.

MARY ROMNEY

*(proudly)*

You err.  
He is the prince of all court painters, sir.  
His friends are lords and duchesses.

ROMNEY

They slip  
From him as rats desert a rotting ship  
That's settling down and down.

MARY ROMNEY

*(torn)*

Is this thing true?

ROMNEY

*(his haunted eyes on her)*

Should I give falsehood as a coin to you  
Who are so kind?

MARY ROMNEY

*(passionately)*

Where is he?

ROMNEY

Who can say?

MARY ROMNEY

Had he no wife?

## ROMNEY

In some far yesterday  
 I think he had. But when Sir Joshua said:  
 "Forget your country marriage, and instead  
 Take Art to wife," he left her. Well, his art  
 Brought fame and money; but his secret heart,  
 Like a closed house, was haunted by a ghost. . . .

## MARY ROMNEY

*(quietly)*

Yet there were other women.

## ROMNEY

*(wearily)*

Oh, a host  
 Of frilled and furbelowed great ladies. . . .

## MARY ROMNEY

One

Of these was called the Lady Hamilton,  
 Was she not?

*[She lights a candle on the mantelshelf.]*

## ROMNEY

Yes.

MARY ROMNEY

And he loved her?

ROMNEY

Her face

Bewitched the artist in him, and her grace  
Filled many a canvas.

MARY ROMNEY

And he loved her.

ROMNEY

*(rousing himself)*

*No.*

*He loved her beauty. (With renewed quiet.)* That was long  
ago,

And all of it is like a tale that's told.

*(Bitterly.)*

Only one love did Romney's bleak heart hold,  
And her he wronged.

MARY ROMNEY

And will he not return?

ROMNEY

*(wryly)*

And say, "My wife, whose love I seemed to spurn,  
You did not share in my celebrity;  
But now I'm old and poor. Pray comfort me."

*[For an instant his face lights sardonically.*

I think that Romney would not fall so low  
For all his faults.

MARY ROMNEY

Does he—does Romney know  
Where his wife lives?

ROMNEY

Nay. Somewhere in the North.  
He's lost all trace. *(Rises.)* 'Tis time that I set forth  
Ere night falls utterly.

*[He opens his portfolio, fumbles in it, takes out a sketch.*

I pray you take  
A little sketch, such as I used to make.  
'Tis all the coin I have.

*[He coughs.*

MARY ROMNEY

*(amazed)*

'Tis finely done.

Aye, wondrous fine!

*[Before he has grasped what she is doing she takes another picture from the portfolio, the rosy portrait of a young and beautiful country girl.*

Oh, let me see this one!

ROMNEY

A sketch of Romney's wife, made by himself  
From memory. Life-sized.

MARY ROMNEY

*(stooping at hearth and taking money from under loose stone)*

Beneath this shelf

I have ten pounds and more. Sell this to me.

*[As if in explanation of her strange conduct.*

It is so young! So fair!

ROMNEY

*(looking at it with the enthralment of the artist)*

It cannot be.

I cannot sell it. It is Romney's wife.

Painted from memory. And true to life

Each contour that I loved.

MARY ROMNEY

You loved!



ROMNEY

Yes, I

Am Romney.

*[He looks at the picture as if held by a spell. For all that he sees or hears he is alone in the room.]*

MARY ROMNEY

*Romney !*

ROMNEY

Why, with what a cry

You speak my name.

*[They gaze at each other in the dim light.]*

MARY ROMNEY

Mine also.

*[She faces him steadily. Romney snatches up the candle, looks at her. Puts it down.]*

ROMNEY

God is just.

He leads me, old and humble, in the dust  
Before your door——

*[His head is bowed for an instant. He cannot look at her. Slowly, and with dread, he raises his eyes, and meets her answering look, her gesture towards him. Speaks brokenly, uncertainly.]*

I, who should be reviled. . . .

You can forgive me. . . .

MARY ROMNEY

*(with beautiful maternal tenderness)*

Why, you are my child,  
My genius child, who all day long must roam,  
And then at twilight sees the lights of home.

ROMNEY

*Mary!*

MARY ROMNEY

I ask no question of the past.  
What was mine at the first is now mine last.

ROMNEY

*(still brokenly : to himself)*

"And ministering angels came to bless——"

Ah, but I have no right——

*[Yet his eyes implore her.]*

MARY ROMNEY

After day's stress  
Comes peace and twilight. Look, where the last bar  
Of sunset fades, the steadfast evening star!

*[Through the last rose of sunset and the gathering  
violet of dusk the white glimmer of the evening  
star is seen through the open doorway. Mary*

110 PRINCE OF COURT PAINTERS

*Romney, her hand on Romney's shoulder,  
watches it, and with a half breath sings very  
low and soothingly, her voice a crooning murmur :*

“Rest! Rest! Twilight is best. The day's storms die.”

ROMNEY

What do you sing?

MARY ROMNEY

*(with ineffable tenderness)*

A tired child's lullaby.

*[The music of the song is faintly continued by the  
orchestra as the curtain falls.*



# EPILOGUE





## EPILOGUE

(For which the dramatist is not responsible)

THESE little plays are set in the Age of Elegance which was also the Age of Johnson. "Fiddles sing all through them," writes Thackeray of the *Letters* of Horace Walpole which mirror the age so well. "Wax lights, fine dresses, fine jokes, fine plate, fine equipages glitter and sparkle there. Never was such a brilliant, jigging, smirking Vanity Fair as that through which he leads us." Yet it was also the time when the man whose life and ideals were the very antithesis of these things was regarded as a leader in matters of the mind. Beau Nash was roughly contemporary with Edmund Burke, and their spacious time had a place for each of them.

Richard Nash (1674-1761) in his heyday was known as the "King of Bath," and he certainly kept royal state among those who flocked to the ancient city to take the waters and share in its continuous and sparkling gaiety. Jane Austen tells us something of the life of Bath, but of a somewhat later time than that of Beau Nash who reigned some fifty years and supported himself by means of his uninterrupted success at the gaming tables. But when old age asserted itself and money grew scarce the leader of dance and rout and revel fell on evil days, and it was when he was like Lamb's Lovel, almost "in the last stage of human weakness,

a remnant most forlorn of what he was," that our play exhibits him to our pity and gentleness.

But John Wesley had on one occasion dealt faithfully with the butterfly. You can read the story in his *Journal*. It provides a dramatic situation. The man who solemnly vowed "to labour after continual seriousness, not willingly indulging myself in any the least levity of behaviour, or in laughter—no not for a moment"—and the King of Revels! Before a crowd of curious on-lookers Nash had asked the preacher "by what authority he did these things."

I replied, "By the authority of Jesus Christ, conveyed to me by the Archbishop of Canterbury when he laid hands upon me, and said: 'Take thou authority to preach the gospel.'" He said, "This is contrary to Act of Parliament; this is a conventicle." I answered, "Sir, the conventicles mentioned in that Act are seditious meetings; but this is not such; here is no shadow of sedition; therefore it is not contrary to that Act." He replied: "I say it is; and besides your preaching frightens people out of their wits." "Sir, did you ever hear me preach?" "No." "How then can you judge of what you never heard?" "Sir, by common report." "Common report is not enough. Give me leave, sir, to ask: Is not your name Nash?" "My name is Nash." "Sir, I dare not judge of you by common report; I think it not enough to judge by." Here he paused awhile, and, having recovered himself, said: "I desire to know what this people comes here for": on which one replied! "Sir, leave him to me; let an old woman answer him. You, Mr. Nash, take care of your body; we take care of our souls; and for the food of our souls we come here." He replied not a word and walked away.

Many modern readers prefer the *Diary* and *Letters* of Fanny Burney (1752–1840) to *Evelina*, for the “blue-stocking” had a marvellous gift for remembering (or re-constructing) a conversation with some prominent figure in art or politics, and she met them all, from the mad King George III. upward to the literary monarch who declared that *Evelina* “contained passages worthy of Richardson.” She was only twenty-five when she “woke one morning to find herself famous,” and she was forty-one when she married a French *émigré*, General d’Arblay. It is under her married name that we make her further acquaintance in Macaulay’s essay. She could make Doctor Samuel Johnson laugh, which is not the least of her claims to fame. In her presence he even becomes arch: “’Tis a terrible thing,” he says to Mrs. Thrale when seated next Miss Burney at dinner, “that we cannot wish young ladies well without wishing them to become old women.”

Art in all its branches appealed strongly to Horace Walpole (1717–97), son of the Sir Robert who is wrongly credited with the cynical remark that “every man has his price.” He might have been the speaker in Tennyson’s *Palace of Art*:

I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house,  
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.  
I said: “O Soul, make merry and carouse,  
Dear soul, for all is well.”

Author, connoisseur, dilettante, amateur printer (and a very good one), beau with “Horace’s dandified treble,”



his life nearly spanned the eighteenth century which he saw at its best and its worst. He wrote a "shocker" entitled *The Castle of Otranto*, but he is best remembered for his *Letters*, of which he left 2700, and his intimacy with Thomas Gray who wrote an ode on the death of friend Horace's favourite cat. He had a real interest in the theatre and the players. Of course he went to Bath and tells in one of his letters of a visit to an "opera," to wit a Wesley meeting (Nash had been dead five years), which he describes with sympathy: "They have boys and girls with charming voices, that sing hymns, in parts, to Scotch ballad tunes; but indeed so long that one would think they were already in eternity, and knew how much time they had before them." Wesley he says was "as evidently an actor as Garrick."

Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) gave us *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*, so that he deserved even one of the three beautiful Miss Linleys. There was a touch of his own Charles Surface about his romantic marriage as well as his general mode of life. He lived, however, to justify his elopement and the faith of his lovely bride, so far as worldly success was concerned. When Garrick retired from Drury Lane Sheridan bought a share of the property which qualified him for a seat in Parliament. He became M.P. for Stafford and won a great reputation as an orator, being retained by the prosecution in the trial of Warren Hastings. He was afterwards treasurer of the navy like Pepys and a Privy Councillor, but the wife of his youth had then been some years in her grave. She had herself

made a great stir as a singer, and her father, Thomas Linley, was a noted musician who had conducted at Bath and joined his son-in-law at Drury Lane where he had charge of the musical department. It was well that his daughter did not live to see the sad decline of her handsome and brilliant husband. He fell deeply into debt and when he lost his seat in Parliament was no longer immune from arrest. Misfortune succeeded misfortune till physical and mental health gave way. But the curtain ought to fall before the end is re-acted, and we prefer to think of the witty Irishman as Miss Linley loved him:

And either way 'tis Richard and Romance!

Edmund Burke (1729-97) stands for the measured period and the eloquence which left little room for wit. He needed a Peg Woffington to rally him out of his periods, poor man, though he could praise a beautiful woman well enough—witness the famous passage from his *French Revolution*:

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in—glittering like the morning-star, full of life and splendour and joy. Oh, what a revolution! and what a heart must I have to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged

to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone!

One wonders whether Peg Woffington would have told him that he might have found—nearer home—a better subject for his glowing praise! She was quite capable of the retort. Fanny Burney's sympathies, at all events, were not with the brilliant advocate at the trial of Warren Hastings, which she describes in her *Diary* with such feeling and such a pictorial pen.

Peg Woffington is Reynolds' *Penelope* and she was also the Sir Harry Wildair of Farquhar's comedy of that name;<sup>1</sup> but she paid for her wonderful success by an early death which, as she would probably have said, true to her Irish extraction, prevented her from ever growing old.

They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not wither them nor the years condemn.

There was a touch of tragedy in the career of George Romney (1734–1802) who is linked to the brilliant circle adorned by Johnson, Burke, Goldsmith, Walpole and Sheridan by his rivalry of Reynolds and Gainsborough. He was born at Dalton in Lancashire and apprenticed to a portrait painter in Kendal, where he married at the age of twenty-two. Six years later he

<sup>1</sup> Charles Reade has a story named after her.

was in London, where he almost leapt into fame, and during the subsequent thirty-seven years he only twice visited Kendal to see his wife and family. He returned once and for all in 1799, but as a broken man, both mentally and physically. He had been one of the moths which fluttered round the beautiful Lady Hamilton, of whom he painted no less than twenty-three portraits. Mrs. Humphry Ward bases the plot of her novel *Fenwick's Career* upon the life of this gifted North-country artist.

We have on the whole a fairly representative company in the little plays of this book. Goldsmith is not here "who wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll," and he had as varied and dramatic a career as even he could have desired. Perhaps the reader will be inspired to add his lovely Mary Horneck to the bevy of beauties of whom he has been reading. Reynolds does not appear, but an ear-trumpet is a certain antidote to romance. Shenstone, whose career was contemporary with Johnson's vigorous manhood and who was the author of *The Schoolmistress* as well as of that incomparable ballad which contains such unforgettable things as:

I have found out a gift for my fair,  
I have found where the wood-pigeons breed,

had the ambition to be known as the creator of the most beautiful garden in England. Here, then, is another subject for a one-act drama in which "the fair" never materialises, for Shenstone was much too shy for any personal presentation of his "gift." Mr. James Minchin

has recently put him into a fascinating dialogue with Johnson and Reynolds.<sup>1</sup> Thomas Gray does not make any dramatic appeal, probably because he appears, like his poetry, to have had no faults. He would have made an excellent scene-shifter, he was so precise. But the whole period is full of delights as Austin Dobson has proved. Read his *Gentlewoman of the Old School* to catch the flavour of the time:

For her e'en Time grew debonair;  
He, finding cheeks unclaimed of care,  
With late-delayed faint roses there,  
And lingering dimples,  
Had spared to touch the fair old face,  
And only kissed with Vauxhall grace  
The soft white hand that stroked her lace  
Or smoothed her wimples;

So left her beautiful. Her age  
Was comely, as her youth was sage,  
And yet she once had been the rage;  
It hath been hinted,  
Indeed, affirmed, by one or two  
Some spark at Bath (as sparks will do)  
Inscribed a song to "Lovely Prue"  
Which Urban printed.

Which brings us back to Bath whence we started and completes the eighteenth-century perfumed circle.

<sup>1</sup> *Talks and Traits*, by James Minchin (Dent & Sons Ltd.).



## THE BEAU OF BATH

RICHARD ("BEAU") NASH was the most famous of English dandies. He was not by any means a mere affected fop, but a man of taste and considerable power of organisation, and a real gift of elegance. While a student of law at the Temple, he became distinguished among his associates for his dress and his manners, and he won larger renown when he was chosen to superintend the pageant at the Middle Temple, prepared to honour William of Orange after his accession to the throne of England, and delighted the king and court by his performance of the duty. A life of hard work is incompatible with perfect dandyism, and the Beau sustained his faultless elegance of manner and appearance by successful gambling, a pursuit which took him to Bath, then notable for its medicinal springs, but not fashionable as it was to become under its new Master of Ceremonies—an office to which Nash was elected shortly after his arrival in the city. During the period of his authority Bath became a famous resort. With unerring judgment he established rules of behaviour on the parade, in the pump-room and assembly. The baths were improved, the standard of lodgings raised, the streets cleared of footpads. A scheme of architectural improvement was prepared by the two Woods and approved by the Beau, and a handsome Assembly Room was erected. Bath became the city of fashion, taste and elegance, and from the writings of Smollett, Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, and others, we realise the delight and entertainment it afforded the young of both sexes. Nash drove in state, as if he were a king, through the streets of the city. His magnificence declined somewhat after the passing of an act of parliament against gambling, but he was able to maintain himself on a pension granted him by the corporation. He was honoured with a stately public funeral, and his tomb may be seen in the abbey church of St. Peter and St. Paul at Bath.

Those who are interested in the Beau's career should read the *Life of Richard Nash*, by Oliver Goldsmith.



## THE SILVER LINING

Fanny Burney's novel *Evelina* should be read by all who delight in the comedy of manners of society, here presented as it appears to a girl of seventeen, the age of the heroine. It delighted contemporary critics, even wise surly Dr. Johnson, the dictator of the taste of the time, could hardly praise it enough, and made his "dear little Burney," as he called Fanny, wonder with some alarm if she could live up to his commendations. Henry Fielding could never draw a character as good as her Mr. Smith; Richardson would have been afraid of her: "O, you little character-monger, you!" he wound up, shaking his head at her.

The book that was to win all this high praise was secretly written. Fanny had, indeed, as a dutiful daughter, mentioned to her father that she was at work on a novel, but he paid little attention to the confidence, and, to her relief, did not ask to see what she had done. She was diffident about her powers, for, after her father's second marriage with a lady who herself was something of a "blue-stocking," her stepmother had warned "the girls," kindly enough, not to spend too much time in scribbling and in "idle crude inventions." As a result of this advice, Fanny, who admired the second Mrs. Burney, made a bonfire of all she had written. She could not so easily destroy or overcome her desire to write, but she gratified it so with such unostentation that her elders read and praised *Evelina* without at first knowing that "Fannikin" was the author. When the secret was revealed, their delight and pride were unbounded.

Through one of the influential friends who sought her after her success, Fanny became known to the Royal Family, and, rather to her dismay, was appointed Second Keeper of the Robes. She found little pleasure in this office, and, after a few years, was permitted to retire with a pension of £100. She married, at the age of forty-one, General D'Arblay, a French émigré.

Besides *Evelina* she wrote three other novels, of which *Cecilia* is the best, some indifferent plays, and a lively and interesting Diary, which she kept from girlhood.

A good book about Fanny Burney and her friends is Austin

Dobson's *Life* in the English Men of Letters series, and she is the subject of one of Macaulay's essays.

P. 25. *Mr. Crisp's house*. Fanny was staying at Chessington, with "Daddy" Crisp, as the Burney children called Mr. Samuel Crisp, friend of their father and the family, when she received the first copy of her book.

P. 28. *Burke*. See note on *Counsel Retained*.

"*Why, Fanny, how you look.*" When Fanny first heard of Dr. Johnson's commendation, she was so much overcome that she then and there danced a jig, under the mulberry tree in the garden at Chessington, to the diversion of "Daddy Crisp."

P. 29. *Fielding*. Author of *Tom Jones*, etc., the most virile of the eighteenth-century English novelists.

*Mrs. Thrale*. A lively and witty leader of fashionable literary society, for twenty years a friend of Dr. Johnson's, herself a writer of letters, memoirs, and her autobiography.

P. 30. *Anstey*. Author of the *New Bath Guide*, who was credited with *Evelina* before the secret came out.

P. 33. *Two hundred pounds*. What Fanny actually got was twenty pounds, and another ten pounds after the publication of the third edition of her book.

## ASHES OF ROSES

Kitty Clive was of Irish extraction, and was not born in Devon, but, most probably, in London. As a girl in her teens, she played her first part as a page in the tragedy *Mithridates*, but it was in comedy that she was to win popularity and establish her reputation. She is chiefly associated with Drury Lane, where she was a member of Garrick's company for twenty-two years. Quick-tempered and good-hearted, she was involved in many quarrels and made many friends. In this little play she is called "fair as spring," but she does not seem to have been beautiful, her charm lying in the irresistible humour of her interpretation of broad comedy.

Among her friends was Horace Walpole, who gave her the villa at Twickenham where she spent her last years, and, after



her death, placed an urn in his garden to her memory, inscribed with a poem in her praise, which ends with the declaration:

The comic muse with her retired,  
And shed a tear when she expired.

This Walpole was both politician and man of letters, and, in his own time, excited much interest for the conversion of his villa at Strawberry Hill into a picturesque Gothic edifice, "a grotesque house with piecrust battlements," as Macaulay describes it, filled with all manner of curious and beautiful things. His romance, *The Castle of Otranto*, is now forgotten except by students of the history of literature. Readers of Jane Austen will remember how delightfully the vogue of the "terror novel" to which this story gave rise is satirised in *Northanger Abbey*. It is as a letter-writer that Walpole is chiefly remembered, his letters being among the best in the English language.

Austin Dobson wrote a memoir of Horace Walpole, and the first part of Macaulay's essay contains an excellent description of the character of the man, his tastes, and the quality of his writing.

### GRETNA GREEN

The "Maria" who is the girl heroine of this little piece is Elizabeth Ann Linley, the eldest of the beautiful daughters of the composer Thomas Linley. Her voice was as beautiful as her face, and she was the *prima donna* of her father's concerts. Gainsborough painted her, and she was pestered with suitors. To save her from the unwelcome attentions of one of these, Sheridan planned to escort her to France, and they were secretly married. Her father disapproved of the match, but at last gave his consent, a public ceremony took place, and the marriage proved a very happy one.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was a man of many-sided genius. He is remembered as the dramatist who wrote *The Rivals*, *The School for Scandal*, and *The Critic*, the creator of Mrs. Malaprop and Lady Teazle and Charles and Joseph Surface, and of one of the best parodies in existence. He was also a politician and an orator. "The personal triumphs of Sheridan may be said

to exceed, in the mass, those of any genius on record. To speak all the day, with overpowering effect, in Westminster Hall, to go in succession to the theatres, and see in each a masterpiece of his own, played by the first of actors, constantly to have the eyes of a nation upon him, this seems like the realisation of as wild a dream as ever flattered young ambition."

The best source of information for the interested is *The Life of R. B. Sheridan*, by Walter Sichel.

P. 59. *Gretna Green*. The romantic associations of Gretna are due to the fact that it is just over the border-line dividing England from Scotland, and, according to Scottish law, a man and woman had merely to declare their wish to be united in the presence of witnesses for their marriage to be regarded as valid. In the middle of the nineteenth century a further law enacted that one of the pair should have been three weeks resident in Scotland before the marriage, and after this Gretna was not so frequently sought by eloping couples.

## COUNSEL RETAINED

Margaret ("Peg") Woffington was born in Dublin, and she first distinguished herself at the age of ten, by playing Polly Peachum in a representation of *The Beggar's Opera* by children. For some time she acted in Dublin. It was as Harry Wildair (see allusion on page 81), in Farquhar's comedy, that she achieved the success that brought her to London, where she speedily became a popular favourite. Her versatility was delightful: she could impersonate a woman of fashion, elegant and *blasée*, and a swaggering young man about town, with equal success.

Edmund Burke, whose works have been described as "the daily bread of statesmen, speakers, and political writers," is one of the greatest of political thinkers. His speeches were not appreciated when delivered: in fact, in his later years, wits called him the "dinner-bell" of the House of Commons, but, published, they won attention and admiration with the other writings that made him famous. Perhaps the most generally known of his works is the *Reflections on the French Revolution*.

The incident described in this little play is supposed to take place some time during the ten years which, having kept terms at the Temple, he spent in obscurity and poverty.

Charles Reade wrote a novel called *Peg Woffington*, to which there is an introduction by Austin Dobson.

P. 83. *Zany*. A buffoon.

P. 84. *Orion*. The most beautiful of constellations, seen in our country during the winter months, from December to March.

## THE PRINCE OF COURT PAINTERS

George Romney, son of a Lancashire builder and cabinet-maker, was an eighteenth-century painter of such fame that he was regarded as a rival to Sir Joshua Reynolds himself. He married his landlady's daughter, the "Mary" of this little play, when he was only twenty-two, and, leaving her in Kendal, saw her hardly at all during his successful career in London and in Italy. It must be remembered, however, that he did not allow her to fall into poverty, and, when he went to London to seek his fortune, it was by her own wish that she remained at her home in the north. Of Lady Hamilton, the "divine Emma," under whose enchantment he fell, he seems to have painted at least forty pictures, including the bewitching "Lady Hamilton as a Bacchante" in the National Gallery, and the famous "Spinstress." When he was old and ill and desolate he returned to his wife, who received him without reproach, and nursed him until he died. "This quiet act of hers is worth all Romney's pictures," says Edward FitzGerald. Tennyson has described the thoughts of the dying painter in the poem "Romney's Remorse." In his pain and delirium, he realises the tenderness of Mary, and finds comfort in the belief that:

Human forgiveness touches heaven, and thence—  
For you forgive me, you are sure of that—  
Reflected, sends a light on the forgiven.

THE END

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